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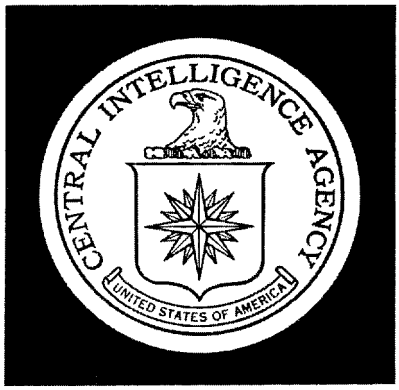

VIETNAM 1967

A Synthesis of

"The Vietnam Situation: An Analysis and Estimate"

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23 May 1967

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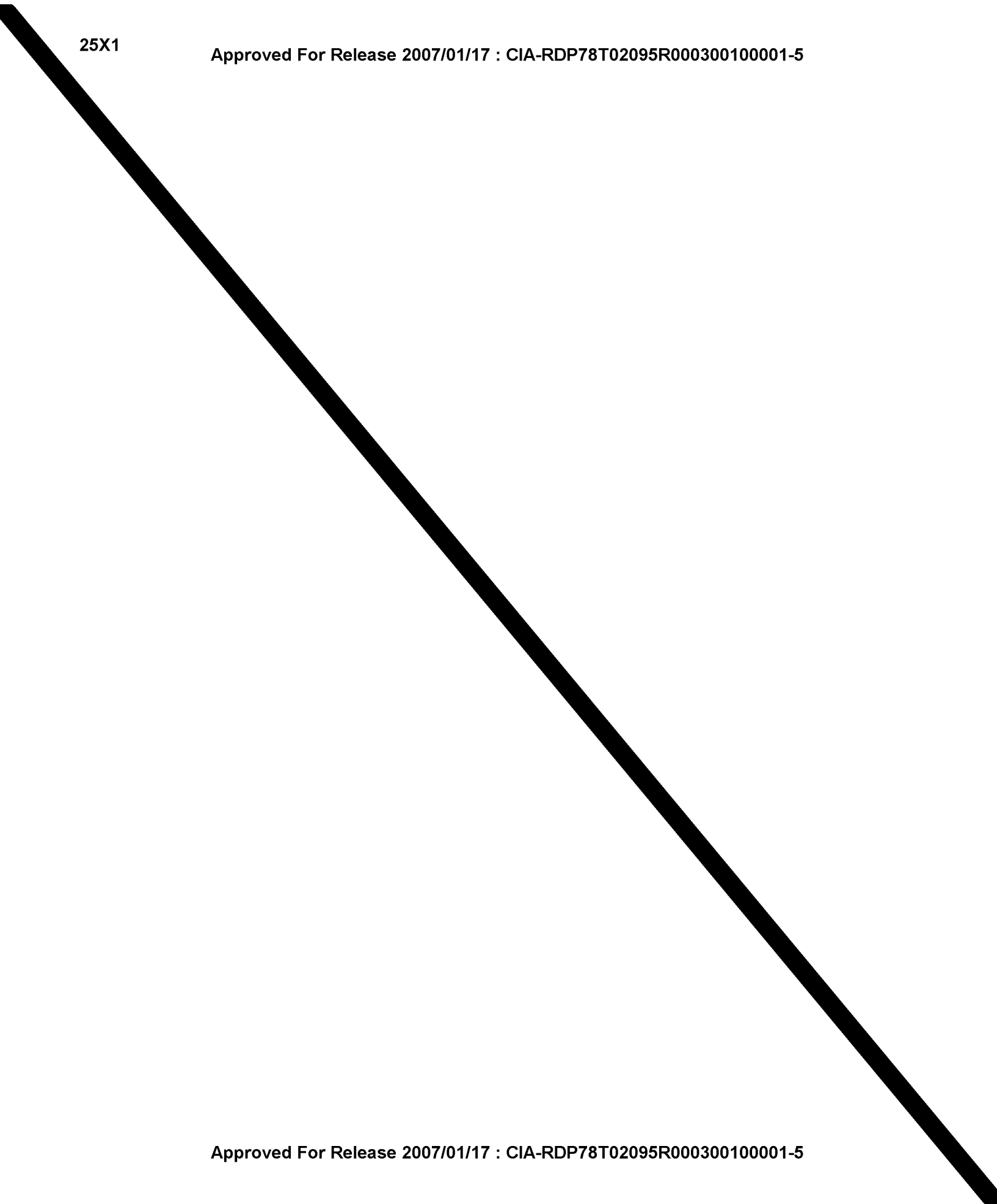

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**Issued as a separate paper.*

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
23 May 1967

VIETNAM 1967

A Synthesis Of "The Vietnam Situation: An Analysis and Estimate"

Summary

CIA has made a series of detailed analyses of the major factors affecting the course of the war in Vietnam in mid-1967. From this, the following principal findings emerge:

A. The past year has seen gains for the allied position in the South, but the strategic balance has not been altered decisively. Two years of bomb damage in the North and setbacks in the South have not shaken Hanoi's determination to pursue the war. The North Vietnamese have managed to keep pace with the US troop build-up and to improve their logistic position. Hanoi seems confident that it can force a prolonged statemate which eventually will force the US to scale down its objectives.

B. Basing their strategy on a war of attrition, the North Vietnamese are unlikely to launch a large-scale conventional attack across the Demilitarized Zone in the near future. All indications point to coordinated thrusts in various areas of the northern and central provinces, mixing both conventional and guerrilla actions, in an attempt to bleed and disperse the allied field forces and expose the more vulnerable pacification programs behind them.

C. While the political situation in Saigon continues remarkably stable, latent frictions could quickly surface as the election in September nears. The unity of the military establishment, crucial to further political development, is threatened by rivalry between Generals Ky and Thieu over the presidential race.

D. Hanoi's determination not to negotiate from a position of weakness appears to have been reinforced by US air attacks on the North. The Communist leaders

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apparently see little to gain from an exchange of views with the US and no prospect of formal negotiations on terms acceptable to them.

E. There are compelling reasons why Peking wants the war to go on. To yield at this point would not only mark a defeat for the Chinese line of revolutionary warfare but would enhance Soviet influence. Although the Chinese are probably prepared to broaden their military and economic aid to sustain Hanoi's will and ability to prolong the war in the South, it is doubtful that they are committed to success in South Vietnam at any price. China clearly wants to avoid a major confrontation with the US, although Chinese intervention would be likely in the event of air attacks on Chinese bases, a major invasion of North Vietnam, or a disintegration of authority in Hanoi.

F. Soviet leaders probably believe that there is no prospect of movement toward negotiations for the time being and appear to have concluded that they have no alternative but to help Hanoi to carry on the war until a political solution is possible.

G. The longer the war lasts, the more problems the US will have with its international image and world position. A long and intense conflict would heighten fears of a broader war, would be widely deplored, and would bring heavy criticism on the US. If the conflict does not spread, however, and if its outcome encourages the belief that East Asia has been stabilized and Communist expansion blocked, it would be widely recognized that the effort had been justified.

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SOUTH VIETNAM

The Military Picture

1. During the past two years the character of the war in South Vietnam has changed radically with the build-up of men and materiel on both sides. Communist prospects for an early victory have dimmed, but the strategic balance has not altered decisively.

2. In 1965 the Vietnamese Communists had victory in sight. Beginning in 1966 the allies gained the initiative, and since then have carried the fight to the enemy's base areas. Communist plans for offensive action have been frustrated, and the Viet Cong's grip on the people in some coastal areas has been broken. In mid-1967, pressed hard by allied forces, the Communists have their sights on a stalemate at the end of a long and costly struggle.

3. Reverses in the South and sustained air attacks on the North did not shake the determination of the Communist leaders in Hanoi. The loss of their military advantage in 1966 did not spell defeat in their view, merely a prolonged conflict -- a contest of wills in which the final outcome was not in doubt. The fact of massive intervention by the US did, however, call for a change in strategy and force levels to match the American effort.

The Enemy Force

4. Hanoi's response came in the form of large-scale infiltration of North Vietnamese regulars across the Demilitarized Zone and through the Laos corridor into the highlands of South Vietnam in late 1966 and during 1967. As a result, the Communists have managed to keep pace with the US build-up in terms of infantry units, and to improve their fire support capability as well. American forces of course now have substantial advantages in tactical mobility and heavy firepower.

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5. Estimating the size, structure and effectiveness of the enemy force in South Vietnam is a difficult intelligence task complicated by methodological problems. It is difficult to acquire hard data in a timely fashion. Also, when new kinds of information become available, it is difficult to relate the new data to the previous figures based on a different breakdown of data. There is, for example, the inevitable tension between the need to apply stringent criteria of confirmation and acceptability (which tend to produce inherently low "assessments," as do the assessments for real estate taxation) with the need for appraisals (like those a real estate salesman makes) which indicate what allied forces actually may be facing. Over the past year, our methodology and data base have improved markedly. Further refinement is still possible, but some problems, particularly acquisition problems involving timeliness, are inherently insoluble (Communist infiltrators, for example, do not usually defect soon after their arrival in South Vietnam).

6. The Communists have continued to expand their main force units, despite the increasing effectiveness of allied "search-and-destroy" operations. Viet Cong-North Vietnam main forces have expanded by 36 percent in the period since January 1966 -- from 85,000 to 115,000. The present level may be even higher, since all the evidence on recent infiltrations and recruitment is not yet in.

7. Part of this expansion of main force units has been at the expense of lower-level Viet Cong formations. To accelerate the expansion, a number of guerrilla elements were upgraded, causing a drain on Viet Cong paramilitary formations and on the so-called "political infrastructure." These forces remain sizeable, however -- probably larger in fact than current order of battle figures indicate. It is difficult to compute the full strength of the paramilitary, combat support and political elements with any real precision. Latest order of battle holdings peg the irregular forces at 113,000, but recent studies indicate that the total may well be close to 200,000. The strength of the support forces, now carried at 25,000, may be several times greater. In short, the over-all strength of the insurgent apparatus in South Vietnam, currently listed as 292,000, may be in the half-million range.

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8. This is not to suggest that the total Communist force structure has increased dramatically in recent months. Instead, an accumulation of improvements in methodology and data now indicates that the allies have long been facing a total organized opposition far larger than accepted official figures have indicated. An appreciation of the probable true size of this organized opposition will make possible far more valid and useful interpretations of future input and loss statistics.

9. Despite a rising casualty rate, the Communists have shown that they are capable of replacing their heavy losses, although probably at some cost in quality. If they have an organized manpower base of anywhere like the size estimated above, the Communists should not have serious trouble in the near future in finding replacement personnel, particularly considering their ability to recruit in South Vietnam outside their organized apparatus along with the infiltration from the North. These two inputs probably run about 14,000 per month. Current losses may be getting close to this figure, but they have probably not exceeded it. Thus, while the Communists probably can keep up their present levels over the next year, we doubt that they can add much to their overall strength.

10. In addition to keeping pace with the expansion of US forces, the Communists have also been able to improve their logistical position in the face of continuing air attacks on their depots and lines of communications. This is reflected in the rising rate at which they are expending ammunition.

11. While their strategic posture now appears somewhat improved over last year despite the allied build-up, the Communists have been hurt. As the Viet Cong position in the countryside has been eroded in some areas as a result of allied military pressure, enemy organization and morale has suffered. The increase in the number of ralliers attests to this. The Communists have reacted by adjusting their strategy to a better mix of conventional and guerrilla actions. Since the first of the year, intensive guerrilla campaigns have been waged against the

pacification program, and centers of population and administration have been hit more methodically. The aim has been not only to check the momentum of our pacification program but to force a diversion of allied forces to protect rear areas, thus reducing the allied offensive potential.

12. All indications point to an intensification of this kind of grinding, positional warfare over the next few months. Captured documents and prisoner interrogation indicate that the Communist effort will be centered in the northern provinces, where there is ready access to supplies and strong artillery and antiaircraft support. Major thrusts in the western highlands and central coastal provinces will be coordinated with the northern offensive. These actions will be supported by extensive guerrilla probes in widely scattered areas to tie down as many allied troops as possible.

13. Hanoi's aim is clear: to demonstrate that a US build-up to half-a-million men has not conclusively altered the balance. What we face now is a crucial test of our ability to prevent a stalemate and maintain the momentum of our recent successes. Capabilities on both sides are such that in the major actions ahead neither is likely to inflict decisive defeat on the other. After that, the situation may depend -- more even than in the past -- on which side is the more determined to persist.

The Communist Infrastructure in the South

14. We believe that over the next year or so the Communists will probably be able to keep their main force up to strength because of their organizational ability and their access to replacements in the south and from the north. If allied pressure continues, however, along with progressive diminution of the areas under Communist control (and, hence, the population base on which the Communists can draw), in order to maintain their main force strength the Communists will be impelled to impose an increasing quantitative and qualitative drain on the other elements of their force structure.

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15. The Communists' southern organization -- that which would remain if all ethnic North Vietnamese elements were withdrawn from South Vietnam -- is obviously large and complex but so tightly organized and disciplined that it should be considered a collective entity. Despite persistent propaganda pretensions to the contrary, the insurgent structure (i.e., the "National Liberation Front") is not a coalition or confederation of disparate political bodies, including ones of non-Communist persuasion. Instead, the organized insurgency has always been directed through a hierarchy of Communist party committees with a vertical command line running from the Lao Dong Politburo in Hanoi to every three-man hamlet cell in South Vietnam. There are obviously debates within the party hierarchy over strategy or tactics, but there is no "NFL" position on either independent of Hanoi.

16. The core of this southern organization is the Communists' intricate network of provincial and district committees and the Communist cadre who work under these committees' jurisdiction and control. It is this committee/cadre structure which maintains the insurgency's essential base at the hamlet and village level. From this base, the leadership exerts control over the rural population which provides both the local (i.e., southern) manpower and resources without which the insurgency would collapse. Virtually all the members of this committee/cadre network are ethnic southerners (usually operating in their native provinces). Many, if not most, of those in positions of command authority were trained in and infiltrated back from North Vietnam.

17. The data available in Washington do not permit a province by province analysis of this Viet Cong infrastructure or even a very meaningful quantified statement of its strength and effectiveness beyond that presented in our order of battle calculations. Available evidence does suggest, however, that over the past year this cadre structure has suffered some shrinkage in numbers, an overall decline in quality (and, perhaps, zeal), and appreciable erosion in morale, particularly at the lower levels. The southern organization as a whole is still large, strong, and effective. It is far from unravelling. But is is fraying appreciably around the edges.

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18. Several factors have contributed to this trend. One, obviously, is allied military power, pressure and success. Another -- less obvious but at least equally important -- is the past year's Communist policy of stripping their local organizations in the drive to increase their main force structure, a practice which has produced morale problems and a qualitative deterioration in the local organizations so stripped.

19. The trends outlined above which have been in process for over a year, could be arrested by a change in Communist assignment practices (which may already be in train), a diminution in allied pressure, or a reversal of the Communists' military fortunes. While they exist, however, these trends pose a grave potential threat to the organizational foundation on which the Communists' whole "liberation war" strategy is based.

Political Trends and Prospects

20. The political situation in South Vietnam has stabilized to a degree which would have seemed virtually impossible two years ago. All of the volatile ingredients which make for politics in Saigon are still there and could surface again rapidly, but the trend of events still appears favorable.

21. Political power remains predominantly in the hands of the military establishment which assumed control in May 1965. But the leading generals have shown a steadily increasing measure of political sophistication and they have learned from experience. They have coped with crises that previous governments could not weather. As their confidence has grown, the military leadership has shown an increasing inclination to move South Vietnam gradually toward a more representative form of government. While there is a long way to go before this becomes a reality, the first steps toward a constitutional system have been taken in an orderly fashion.

22. For more than a year the military leaders have been quietly exploring ways to develop a mechanism within this constitutional framework for

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ensuring that they retain political control. Prime Minister Ky has made overtures to a wide range of civilian groups, and may eventually develop broad support outside the military.

23. These developments have already placed strains on the unity of the military establishment. Until now the generals have preserved a remarkable degree of cohesion. This is being threatened by the rivalry shaping up between Generals Ky and Thieu over the presidential election scheduled for September. Although the leaders have recognized that military unity is essential to continued political stability, they have been unable to agree among themselves on who should be the candidate representing the military. Ky has formally announced that he is a candidate for the presidency, and Thieu has indicated that he may also enter the race.

24. The civilian opposition to the military establishment is fragmented and almost certainly incapable of developing the kind of organized effort required to defeat a candidate with the undivided support of the military. If Thieu goes through with his threat to compete with Ky, the race would be thrown wide open and the progress we have seen in the political sphere could be quickly undone.

25. In any event, the temperature of political life in Saigon will rise sharply during the summer months as the election campaign builds up. Restive civilian elements -- the militant Buddhist community in particular -- will make the most of their opportunities, and much of the politicking will focus on resentment against the US presence in South Vietnam. Predictions cannot therefore be offered with confidence. It remains the case, however, that South Vietnam's record of political achievement has been impressive, and that in the process now in train there are signs of genuine political development.

Economic Factors

26. There are, obviously, economic considerations which affect any estimate of South Vietnam's

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political prospects. The economy of South Vietnam, greatly distorted by the war, will have to endure additional strains during 1967 as the demand for goods continues to exceed the available supply. A substantial increase in US force strength could add further pressures. Inflationary pressures were eased somewhat by the GVN's reasonably well-executed mid-1966 reforms, including a devaluation of the piaster, but renewed pressures began to appear by the end of 1966 and are still present. It would be inaccurate to say that South Vietnam is on the verge of a runaway inflation, but the danger is constantly present and strenuous efforts by both the US and the GVN will be necessary to hold inflationary pressures within acceptable bounds.

Pacification

27. Progress in the Revolutionary Development (RD) program has been slow so far this year, and prospects for significant improvement quickly are not bright. The pacification concepts now jointly endorsed by the US and the South Vietnamese government are fundamentally sound, however, and the long term outlook is more favorable.

28. We have come a long way in developing an understanding of the program, and in devising the concepts, techniques, and organizational tools necessary to a sucessful program. Formidable problems remain, however. Planning delays, command and administrative changes, and the preoccupation of Vietnamese officials with broader political affairs have all inpeded progress. Moreover, an intensified Viet Cong campaign of guerrilla pressure has retarded the program in some areas. The very intensity of the Communists' counteraction, however, suggests that they are concerned about its potential.

29. The magnitude of the task is reflected in new statistics which indicate that of the 12,000 or so hamlets in South Vietnam, roughly one-third are controlled by the Viet Cong and government influence is marginal in another third. Only 14 percent of the hamlets show real progress toward development.

30. The chief obstacle to more rapid progress is lack of security at the local level. This is now the responsibility of the South Vietnamese Government, and the army in particular. The Viet Cong attacks on Revolutionary Development teams have revealed serious weaknesses in carrying out this responsibility. Although more than 50 ARVN battalions have theoretically been committed to direct support of pacification, their performance has been spotty and they have failed to take the kind of aggressive action required to counter the Viet Cong campaign. Even where ARVN commanders accept their mission with good grace, they seldom seem to appreciate that what is required is not a "screen" behind which pacification efforts can be mounted but, instead, an aggressive, offensive effort designed to harry, render ineffective and, eventually, destroy the Communists' district companies and village platoons. Only one-third of the Popular and Regional forces are committed to direct support of pacification, and their efforts have not been effectively coordinated with RD activities. The Police Field Forces continue generally to be misused in static security functions rather than in support of RD.

31. The reorganization of US advisory and support functions under MACV control should improve coordination of US planning and operational activities. Some progress seems likely in more effective concentration of resources, attaining further flexibility, and reinvigorating the GVN administrative machinery. Little improvement is likely, however, until the Vietnamese armed forces develop the will and the capability to deal with the problem effectively. While we can expect limited advances in areas where good security is provided by allied forces, there are likely to be further setbacks in areas more vulnerable to Viet Cong pressures.

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NORTH VIETNAM

North Vietnamese Attitudes Toward the War

32. The decision on whether or not the Lao Dong (Communist) Party will continue the war in South Vietnam rests with the eleven members of the Politburo in Hanoi (four of whom are ethnic southerners). This group of men shows every intention of pursuing the war. Despite the prospect of intensified US attacks, Hanoi continues to spurn negotiations and to prepare for a long hard struggle. Ho Chi Minh and his lieutenants remain convinced that they can outlast the US in Vietnam and they have programmed their tactics to fit the theory.

33. North Vietnam's leaders are convinced that their motivation is stronger than ours. Accordingly, their strategy is geared to a war of attrition. They believe the US must either win quickly in South Vietnam or settle on terms favorable to the Communists, whereas a military stalemate will suffice for their purpose.

34. The North Vietnamese position on negotiations during recent months has remained consistently negative. Hanoi refuses to offer any quid pro quo in return for a cessation of the bombing. Its release of the exchange of letters between President Johnson and Ho Chi Minh amounted virtually to a rejection of secret diplomacy as a means of promoting a settlement. Captured documents have confirmed that the North Vietnamese look on negotiations primarily as a tactic to be used in conjunction with warfare to extract maximum concessions from the US.

35. The continued movement of North Vietnamese troops into South Vietnam is perhaps the best evidence that Hanoi means to keep up the fight. The buildup of these forces in the northern provinces must have been planned with the realization that the ground war would intensify and lead to further escalation by the US. The increasing use by the Communists of mortars and artillery and Hanoi's

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reported efforts to obtain additional Soviet and Chinese military aid provide further evidence.

36. Consistent with a strategy of attrition, it is unlikely that the Communists will attempt a large-scale conventional attack across the Demilitarized Zone in the near future. Nor does it seem likely that they will commit their assets in South Vietnam to one major campaign. They probably will proceed along basically the same lines as in the past, infiltrating sufficient replacement personnel to keep existing units at combat level and sending in additional units as needed to counter the introduction of more allied forces.

37. There are continuing signs of a debate among Communist military leaders over the relative merits of large-scale conventional actions and guerrilla tactics. A compromise solution seems to be emerging: heavier emphasis on guerrilla activity but primary weight still on large unit actions.

38. The North Vietnamese must realize that any success in campaign they plan to launch in the northern provinces and western highlands will be modest. They probably will be satisfied if these engagements result in heavy US casualties, even if it means heavier Communist losses.

39. Hanoi is unlikely in the foreseeable future to seek help in the form of foreign combat troops for use in South Vietnam. It is always possible that for propaganda purposes an "international brigade" will be formed and sent south, but only the Chinese are readily available in sufficient strength to be of much use. The North Vietnamese leaders appear confident that the manpower available to them in North and South Vietnam is sufficient to carry on the war. A recently captured notebook indicated that the Communists believe they can cope with a US force level of a million men, and there was no reference to foreign volunteers.

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40. This attitude stems in part from the fact that no significant foreign ground combat force is likely to be made available for fighting in the South. Hanoi recognizes that the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries would not send substantial ground forces to South Vietnam. The North Vietnamese also appear to believe that there is little prospect of significant Chinese Communist involvement as long as the war is confined to the South. Even in the event that Communist main forces in South Vietnam were defeated and the guerrilla and political infrastructure destroyed, it is unlikely that Hanoi would call for Chinese assistance in the form of combat personnel for the South. This is because, if for no other reason, Hanoi almost certainly understands that Peking would not respond favorably to such a request.

41. At no time have Vietnamese Communist spokesmen specified any point at which foreign combat personnel of any nationality would be requested, and all available evidence suggests that Hanoi does not expect that point ever to be reached.

42. Hanoi has, however, called in substantial foreign personnel to aid in the air defense system in the North. Soviet SAM operators, North Korean jet fighter pilots, and Chinese antiaircraft artillery units have been used against US aircraft. In addition, on several occasions in recent weeks Chinese jet fighters have tried to engage US planes operating over northeastern North Vietnam. Hanoi is likely to call for further help in the air defense field as damage from the air strikes mounts and defense measures prove inadequate.

Impact of the US Air Strikes on North Vietnamese Views

43. More than two years of air attacks have had little effect on Hanoi's military strategy, on its political tactics, and on its confidence in Communist prospects over the long term. Intensified US air operations do not seem to have shaken the North Vietnamese leaders' conviction that they can withstand the bombing until a time when the US is compelled to scale down its objectives and modify its terms for

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negotiations. Nor has it caused them to change their view that the outcome of this test of will and endurance will be determined by the ground war in the South, not by the air war in the North.

44. Hanoi's determination not to negotiate from a position of weakness has been reinforced by the bombing. Its attitude toward negotiations continues to be colored by a conviction that the US is bent on destroying the Viet Cong political and military structure, dividing Vietnam indefinitely on the Korean pattern, and maintaining an American presence in South Vietnam. The North Vietnamese consequently see little to gain in an exchange of views with the US and no prospect of formal negotiations on terms acceptable to them. The air strikes have had no discernible effect on their estimate that only a military stalemate in the South will eventually force an adjustment of US objectives.

45. There is little reason to believe that Foreign Minister Trinh's reference in January to the possibility of talks if the US ceased all "acts of war" against the DRV represented a retreat force on Hanoi by the air strikes alone. A shift toward more flexible tactics had been under way since November, apparently designed to discredit US policy initiatives and to stimulate greater world pressures for American concessions. Hanoi may also have calculated that a softer line would deter an escalation of the war which they apparently expected following the American elections. The implications of growing disorder in China in late 1966 probably was another factor in Hanoi's decision to modify its public stance on negotiations.

46. Present evidence suggests that the North Vietnamese are preparing for intensified air strikes. Even with the prospect of more extensive destruction, they are unlikely to change their stand. New developments in China or in the war in South Vietnam could increase their interest in negotiations, but it does not appear that the air strikes alone will do so.

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Effects of the Air Strikes on North Vietnam's Economy

47. The bombings in the North and the war effort in the South have caused a significant erosion of the economy, but have not significantly affected North Vietnam's ability to continue the war.

48. There are three principal reasons for this. First, the economy is at a comparatively primitive stage of development. Agriculture and small plants and shops predominate, and the people have simple needs, most of which are satisfied locally.

49. Second, imports from Communist countries have provided large amounts of military equipment and have enabled North Vietnam to make up shortfalls in production and to take care of new needs. Imports in the first four months of 1967 increased sharply, and food imports were greater than for all of 1966.

50. Third, the North Vietnamese have been able to compensate for the bombing in various ways, and have shown considerable ingenuity in keeping lines of communications open. In fact, by constructing multiple bypasses at critical points and by improving alternate systems, they have reduced the vulnerability of their logistics net.

51. Most of the important industrial and power plants in North Vietnam did not become targets until this year, and the economy has not fully felt the effects of the damage this year. Major industrial production is sure to fall considerably. Even if further bombing were to eliminate modern industry entirely, however, the economy could still function at levels adequate to supply the bulk of the population's needs and to service and repair lines of communication.

52. The overall level of economic activity probably did not change much in 1965 and 1966, although production declined in some sectors. Small-scale industry has been little affected. North Vietnam's industry produces little military equipment; its major contribution to the war effort is in maintaining transport equipment, most of which is imported, and in helping keep open lines of communication. Food production declined in 1966, partly

because of poor weather, and textile production also fell, but imports have taken up much or perhaps all of the slack.

53. Efforts are under way to make the economy more responsive to current needs. Local industries are being developed, mostly with Communist aid, to reduce the economy's vulnerability to bombing. In addition, industry is being dispersed somewhat, and non-essential civilians are being relocated from some urban areas.

54. North Vietnam's chronic trade deficit increased in 1966 as exports fell and imports grew, but the trade deficit has been made up by aid from other Communist countries.

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INTERNATIONAL ASPECTS

Chinese Attitudes Toward the War

55. The expanding US military presence in South Vietnam and intensifying air operations in the North have caused Peking to alter its strategic assessment of the war. The Chinese have had to give increasing attention to the possibility that out of Vietnam's "war of national liberation" could come an attack on China, and their expressions of military commitment to Hanoi have become increasingly qualified. Peking's hostility toward negotiations of any kind, however, has grown even more rigid.

56. Peking sees compelling reasons for the war in Vietnam to go on. For one thing, it realizes that the USSR would play a dominant role in any political solution and that in conditions of peace Soviet economic and military aid to Hanoi would pose a major threat to Chinese influence there. To yield at this point would not only mark a defeat for Peking's general line of revolutionary warfare but would represent a major gain for Moscow.

57. We believe the Chinese are prepared to exert considerable political pressure, to broaden military and economic aid, and -- if requested -- to station combat troops in North Vietnam in order to sustain Hanoi's will and ability to prolong the war in the South. We do not believe, however, that Peking is committed to Communist success in South Vietnam at any price. Rather than accept the risk of a US attack on mainland China, we think the Chinese would be inclined to accept a termination of the fighting without negotiations, in the hope that this might permit some level of resistance to continue.

58. While we continue to believe that Peking wants to avoid a major military confrontation with the US, we are certain that the Chinese would fight if the US launched a deliberate and sustained air

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attack on Chinese bases and supply lines in South China. Two other situations probably would bring some form of Chinese intervention: a major invasion of North Vietnam, and the disintegration of effective authority in Hanoi.

59. Peking's reaction to an extension of ground operations across the DMZ would depend on its assessment of the extent and nature of the threat to the Hanoi regime. A landing just north of the line with limited objectives might be answered with only a conspicuous buildup of combat forces in South China and perhaps northern parts of North Vietnam. The Chinese would be prepared, however, to engage US forces in North Vietnam if they deemed it necessary to preserve the Communist regime.

Soviet Attitudes and Intentions Toward the War*

60. Soviet leaders see the war as advantageous to them in many ways, but they also see disadvantages which make their options unpromising and hazardous. They probably believe that there is no prospect of movement toward a political solution for several months at best and appear to have concluded that for the time being they have no alternative but to help Hanoi to carry on the war, hoping that changes of attitude in either Hanoi or Washington, or both, will make a political solution possible later.

61. The Soviet leaders fear that the US, in its impatience to get the war over, will escalate the conflict in a way which will increase the risks and costs for the USSR; in an effort to forestall this they are currently stressing their intention to move to more vigorous support of North Vietnam. We believe that during the coming months they will continue to supply equipment designed to strengthen air and coastal defenses in North VIetnam and to increase the firepower of both the regular North Vietnamese forces and the Communist forces fighting in the South.

Conclusions of Special National Intelligence Estimate 11-11-67.

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62. The North Vietnamese at some point will probably press the Soviets for more sophisticated equipment than those types now arriving on the scene or in the pipeline. These might include cruise missiles and tactical rockets which could be used to support North Vietnamese operations in the DMZ area and against US warships. The USSR might believe it had to respond to such pressure, although it would be concerned that the use of such weapons would provoke a still more dangerous US response.

63. If the intensity of the conflict were to be increased by the US, we believe that at some point the USSR would create an atmosphere of heightened tension with the US. The Soviets might take certain actions designed to bolster North Vietnam and to warn the US, such as the provision of limited numbers of volunteers or crews for defense equipment or possibly aircraft. The mining or the blockade of the North Vietnamese coast would be most likely to provoke these responses, since this would constitute a direct challenge to the Soviets, and there would be little they could do on the scene. We do not think the Soviets are prepared to resort to strong and direct threats of general war as a means to protect North Vietnam or to preserve Soviet face.

North Vietnam's Propaganda Capabilities in the Free World

64. The North Vietnamese expend a great amount of effort attempting to encourage international support for their cause and opposition to US actions in Vietnam.

65. Hanoi invites sympathetic foreigners to North Vietnam, sends high-powered delegations to leftist front meetings, and provides "documentary" evidence to interested parties showing US "atrocities." The major channel through which Hanoi pumps its propaganda to most non-Communist countries is the local Communist party. Wherever possible, of course, influential newsmen are used by the North Vietnamese to carry their story to the free world.

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66. The Communists, world-wide, have had considerable success in selling the concept that the struggle in South Vietnam is indigenously rooted, and that North Vietnamese intervention in the fray was prompted by prior US intervention. The prevalence of this view is a major political asset for the Communists.

67. Hanoi's representatives in Paris, Cairo and New Delhi are particularly effective in promoting Hanoi's policies through both official and public channels.

68. The North Vietnamese are hampered by several factors, however, in their effort to elicit such support. One inhibiting factor is the paucity of permanent North Vietnamese representation in the non-Communist world. Another is the fact that Hanoi's policy toward negotiations has been far too inflexible to stimulate much support. Even its Soviet bloc allies have found it difficult to argue North Vietnam's case on negotiations persuasively.

69. On balance, it appears that Hanoi's cause is best served in the non-Communist world not by the sympathy it has been able to generate but by the fact that many non-Communist nations, fearing the war will grow larger, apply pressure on the US to bring the war to a close.

World Opinion and the US International Position

70. Articulate opinion in Europe generally disapproves US intervention in Vietnam and our military strategy in Vietnam. With certain exceptions (Spain and Portugal and, to some extent, West Germany,) it is an almost universal view that the US has blundered in the fact and the extent of its involvement. Moreover, among intellectuals, youth, and organized labor there is a strong moral revulsion against the bombing policy and against what has come to be thought of as the US objective, namely, to impose a puppet militaristic regime upon a people trying to establish their own national identity.

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71. These views contrast strongly with the official policy of most governments, one which might be described as support for our general objectives and sympathy for the problems and difficulties we have encountered. But even the governments which quite honestly make these pronouncements of support often maintain grave reserve about the wisdom and content of our policy. With intensification of the bombing campaign, an apparent slowdown in military progress on the ground, and a growing suspicion about US willingness to negotiate, the misgivings of these government leaders have intensified.

72. Asian nations view the conflict more directly because of its impact on power relationships in the area. The Australians and New Zealanders, of course, would like to block Communist expansion and believe it in their national interest to provide political and military support to the effort. Other allies feel the same way, notably the Thais and South Koreans. Some countries not allied with us also wish to block Communist expansion and wish to see the US effort succeed, but they are cautious; they do not wish to be in an exposed position in case of a compromise political settlement.

73. Most Latin American, African, and Near Eastern countries have problems of their own and simply do not feel that Vietnam is related to their concerns. They would like the war over with; many feel that the US has lost interest in them or -- in Latin America especially -- takes them for granted. Those with useful bilateral relations with the US want to avoid endangering those relations by criticizing the US. Those with poor relations with the US -- and these are largely the more radical of the new, post-colonial regimes -- feel free to vent their criticisms of the US.

74. The longer the war lasts, the more intractable our problems will become. Some of these will be related to the conduct of the war itself. There is little doubt that the US could make some increases in the level of military action in Vietnam without suffering serious and immediate damage to its international position; it is impossible to judge precisely

what would precipitate such damage. Certain steps, such as the use of nuclear weapons, would of course do so. An accumulation of minor escalations might have this effect.

75. A long and intense conflict would intensify fears of Chinese involvement, would be widely regretted, and would bring heavy and direct criticism upon the United States, including criticism from new quarters. But if the outcome were such as to encourage the belief that East Asia had been stabilized and Communist expansion blocked, many people and most Asians would conclude that the effort had been justified. On the other hand, if finally the US terminated the conflict on terms which clearly constituted an abandonment of its objectives, the US would suffer very serious losses of prestige.

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COMMUNIST REACTIONS TO VARIOUS US COURSES OF ACTIONS*

76. An increase in the US force level in South Vietnam on the order of 200,000 men might dispel certain notions that Hanoi has entertained about weakening American resolve. Since Hanoi almost certainly believes that the outcome of the war will be decided in the South and has based its strategy on a war of attrition, the North Vietnamese would recognize that a large increase in US forces was more of a threat to their objectives than increased bombing.

77. Hanoi might estimate, however, that the US buildup could be neutralized by a relatively small increase in their own main forces, and that another year of fighting at a higher level might generate greater pressures in the US to end the war, especially in a presidential election year.

78. As long as Hanoi did not alter its basic policy toward the war, the US buildup probably would not occasion any significant changes in Soviet or Chinese policies. North Vietnam probably would receive some heavier weaponry for use by the Communist forces in the South.

79. A continuation of the US effort on about the present level, with increases of no more than a division or so, probably would be interpreted in Hanoi as confirmation of its estimate that US policy is constrained by internal factors and foreign commitments. The North Vietnamese probably would believe that American reluctance to commit a larger number of new troops gave them an excellent chance to outlast the US in a war of attrition. There would be little reason for Moscow or Peking to react significantly to a leveling off of US deployments.

80. An intensification of the present bombing program, without any attempt to close ports or strike airfields not already hit, probably would fall within the limits of what Hanoi is prepared to tolerate. There is probably no level of air or naval action against North Vietnam which Hanoi has determined in advance would be so intolerable that

**This section is a summary of a memorandum entitled "Reactions to Various US Courses of Action," 12 May 1967 issued separately from "The Vietnamese Situation: Analysis and Estimate"*

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the war had to be stopped. Precise Communist countermeasures against this course of action are difficult to predict. There is not necessarily a close relationship between the level of bombing and Hanoi's strategy or Peking's and Moscow's responses. Captured documents suggest that military planning in South Vietnam proceeds without much reference to US bombing of North Vietnam.

81. Intensified bombing would cause Hanoi to seek additional military assistance from the USSR and China. The net result probably would be an expansion of Chinese troop presence, possibly including at some stage the introduction of combat infantry at the bases in North Vietnam apparently being prepared for Chinese use. We would not exclude the surfacing of some Soviet military personnel in a "volunteer" role.

82. A similar bombing program including effective interdiction of North Vietnamese harbors would have the important additional effect of posing a direct challenge to the USSR. Moscow could react by countering US interdiction with its own naval forces, by bringing pressure on the US in some other area, or by accepting the necessity of relying mainly on rail transport across China to support Hanoi. The latter possibility seems most likely.

83. Another principal effect would be to place China in a commanding position. Peking would not only control the remaining lines of supply but its influence in Hanoi would almost certainly increase at the expense of the USSR.

84. It is conceivable that interdiction of the harbors accompanied by intensive bombing of military, industrial and transportation targets would cause the situation in North Vietnam gradually to deteriorate to the point that Hanoi felt it necessary to change its policies. Although we cannot estimate in advance how much Hanoi might be willing to absorb, we think it unlikely that the bombing and mining program would create such pressures that Hanoi would choose to negotiate or otherwise

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terminate the war. In any case, the critical factors would be Hanoi's view of Communist prospects in the South and its assessment of world reaction to the new escalation.

85. A combination of pressures might eventually persuade Hanoi that its military and political situation as a whole and the prospects for success in South Vietnam were deteriorating seriously. The attitudes of its allies might then become critical. We think it unlikely that the Chinese would offer, or the Vietnamese accept, open intervention by Chinese forces in South Vietnam. We think there would be a good chance that at this stage the Soviets would strongly urge Hanoi to move toward a political settlement, although we do not think the Soviets would apply any sort of sanction to compel Hanoi. Hanoi might then decide both to negotiate and try to keep a guerrilla action going in the South.

86. Communist reaction to a restriction of US bombing to southern North Vietnam would depend to a great extent on the timing and on what other US actions accompanied or followed it. Hanoi and Peking would have a strong inclination to attribute the shift in bombing policy to international opinion and to domestic US criticism, and thus see it as confirming their view that the US will not persist in a long struggle.

87. This interpretation might be dispelled if the US could make it clear that the bombing was being redirected in an effort to raise the cost of moving men and supplies into South Vietnam. Hanoi would have to recognize that the redirection of the bombing program would probably reduce criticism and pressures in the US and abroad, thus strengthening the possibility that the US could and would persist.

88. The Soviets would probably be more disposed than Hanoi to view the US move as an effort to bring about a settlement, and far less likely to consider it a mark of failing US resolve. They would probably advise Hanoi to probe the US position as a step toward negotiations.

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Mary

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